

The Empire and Christianity

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ing in the ranks. But the whole case was changed when the Roman Emperor was a Christian, and the army took its oath to a champion and no longer to an enemy of the Church. The bishops at once changed front—they could not help themselves— and at the Council of Aries we have seen the Gal-lican bishops passing a canon anathematising any Christian who flung down his arms in time of peace. There were still extremists, as there are to-day, who denounced war with indiscriminate censure; there must have been a much larger number who acquiesced in standing armies as a necessary evil, but themselves carefully kept aloof from service; the majority, as to-day, would recognise that the security of a State rests ultimately upon force, and would pray that their cause might be just whenever that force had to be put into operation. It is not Ter-tullian with his dangerous doctrine that politics have no interest for the Christian (*nee ulla magis res aliena quampublica*), that the Christian has no country but the world, and that Christ had bidden the nations disarm when he bade Peter put up his sword—it is not Tertullian who is the typical representative of the Church in its relations with the State and mundane affairs, but the broad-minded Augustine who, when nervous Christians appealed to him to say whether a Christian could serve God as a soldier, said that a man might do his duty to his God and his Emperor as well in a camp as elsewhere.

God-fearing men could spend their days in the legions without peril to their souls, but the atmosphere of a Roman camp, full as it was of barbarians